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ABSTRACT

The Canadian federal government will commit $25 million to an initiative aimed at assisting immigrant women. The initiative will support settlement orientation, and language and skills training to help immigrant women adapt to Canadian life and enhance their employment opportunities. Funding areas include the following: (1) delivery of basic language skills training and improvement of general orientation programs in overseas refugee camps; (2) expansion of orientation and basic settlement language skills assistance programs in Canada; and (3) increased workplace training for women. Program components include the following: (1) enhancing the orientation counseling provided by non-government field workers and External Affairs personnel abroad; (2) expanding and focusing the efforts of the Immigrant Settlement and Adaption Program (ISAP) and the Settlement Language Training Program (SLTP), with the emphasis on increasing the role of non-governmental organizations; and (3) introducing a new program under the Canadian Jobs Strategy administered by Employment and Immigration Canada for language and skills upgrading in the workplace. The project will begin early in the 1989/90 fiscal year. (FMW)

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Minister of Employment and Immigration

CANADA

Ministre de l'Emploi et de l'Immigration

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$25 MILLION INITIATIVE TO ASSIST IMMIGRANT WOMEN

Toronto -- October 27, 1988 -- The federal government will commit $25 million to an initiative aimed at assisting immigrant women. Details of the announcement by Prime Minister Mulroney were released by Employment and Immigration Minister Barbara McDougall.

The three-part initiative will support settlement orientation and language and skills training to help immigrant women adapt to Canadian life and enhance their employment opportunities. It includes funds to allow the overseas delivery of basic language skills training in refugee camps and to improve general orientation programs; expansion of orientation and language assistance programs in Canada; and increased workplace training for immigrant women.

Elements of this three-part strategy include enhancing the orientation and counselling efforts of non-government field workers and External Affairs personnel abroad; expanding and focussing the efforts of the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP) and the Settlement Language Training Program (SLTP), with the emphasis on an increased role for non-governmental organizations in helping immigrant women adapt to the community; and introduce a new program under the Canadian Jobs Strategy administered by Employment and Immigration Canada for language and skills upgrading of immigrant women in the workplace.

"The Canadian Job Strategy has worked well, and is flexible enough to allow us to meet emerging needs and to target assistance to those most in need," said the Honourable Barbara McDougall. "This new program is intended to do just that -- give help to immigrant women whose lack of language skills presents a barrier to full participation in the community or to advancement in the labour force."

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Backgrounder

- Full participation in Canadian Society requires a knowledge of one of the two official languages. Immigrants who enter Canada as family class members are not required to establish official language ability and a large number speak neither English nor French. Immigrant landing records from 1982 to 1987 show that of the 634,162 immigrants (all ages) admitted to Canada 273,070 had no knowledge of either English or French. Of this 273,070, females accounted for 144,445. A preliminary analysis of 1986 Census data shows that a total of 218,000 residents of Canada can speak neither English nor French; two-thirds of these are women with long-term residence here.

- Currently, prospective immigrants are informed and counselled abroad about life in Canada by personnel of Canadian missions but the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (CEIC), has not been able to provide additional support for orientation or language training services abroad.

- Many immigrant women enter or re-enter the labour market with little or no work experience/training, and without adequate literacy or numeracy skills. Others are in the labour market at a skill level below their training. These women are under-skilled or under-employed. They may be forced into this condition for various reasons, including lack of language ability, obsolescence of their training or the lack of opportunity to gain experience expected by employers.

- CEIC already provides some programming to partially address these problems through the Job Entry Program of the Canadian Jobs Strategy (CJS), the Settlement Language Training Program (SLTP), a pilot project in its 3rd year, and the orientation services of the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP).

- CJS criteria limit language training to those destined to the labour-market who cannot obtain employment due to lack of fluency in one of the official languages. This limitation has two unfortunate consequences for immigrant women:

  1. There is no full-time language training available to immigrant women not planning to enter the paid labour force. As a result of limited language skills, they become socially isolated non-participants in Canadian society.

  2. Immigrant women often accept low-status, low-paying jobs where they do not need English or French. Without the opportunity to break the language barrier, they are very likely to be trapped into these jobs.

- Today's announcement is intended to address these problem areas.

Language Training - Immigrant Women

Current Programming

1. Canadian Jobs Strategy (CJS)

- The Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (CEIC) provides institutional language training to labour market destined immigrants under the Direct Purchase Option of the Job Entry program of CJS.

- CJS funded language training is designed for persons who cannot make the transition to the labour market because they lack fluency in English or French. Present CJS funding helps overcome:

  - barriers, because as skilled workers they cannot obtain employment in their trade or profession or in a suitably related occupation.

  - barriers, because as unskilled workers they cannot be placed by an employment counsellor in suitable employment.

  - barriers, because as unskilled or unemployed workers they do not have sufficient language skills to participate in appropriate vocational training required to improve their employment situation.

- Trainees should expect to acquire sufficient communication skills by attending a CJS language course to be able to integrate into the labour market.

- CJS purchases the language training seats and provides living allowances for all trainees except for those immigrants who were admitted to Canada on the basis of a family class or assisted relative sponsorship.

- All immigrants attending CJS funded language training are eligible for supplementary allowances (commuting, living-away-from-home, dependent care and trainee travel).

- In 1987/88, CJS provided 6,419 training seats for immigrant women at a cost of $30.46 million (seats plus allowances). In 1986/87, CJS provided 6,136 training seats for immigrant women at a cost of $27.94 million (seats plus allowances). Currently, $64 million is spent under CJS for all language training for all immigrants destined for the labour market.

2. Settlement Language Training Program (SLTP)

- CEIC introduced the SLTP as a pilot project in 1986/87 to provide basic language skills for immigrants not immediately destined for the labour force. The program's primary target group is immigrant women at home with family responsibilities.

- SLTP funds non-governmental, non-profit organizations to provide a flexible program of up to 500 hours of instruction.

- SLTP provides on-site child minding as required and makes available access allowances (out-of-pocket

expenses such as bus fare where a need for reimbursement is indicated).

- The program has provided language instruction for some 3,000 participants during the past 2 years.

- In 1987, 52 SLTP contracts were entered into with community agencies to serve 1,930 participants at a cost of $1 million.

- In 1988, $2.5 million has been allocated to this pilot project in the expectation that a target population of 4,000 will receive some basic language skills.

New Initiatives

Overseas Orientation ($1.4 M)

- Provides preparation for successful settlement in Canada to intended permanent residents awaiting final immigrant processing abroad.

- Involves teaching of basic language skills and a general orientation to Canada directed primarily at refugees in camps awaiting immigration processing.

- Involves also a reaching out to other immigrants, especially from the family class many of whom are women, through orientation packages to enhance current counselling efforts of non-governmental field workers and External Affairs personnel in missions abroad.

- Recently arrived immigrants, will be better informed about Canada and less likely to become socially isolated.

- Those who have benefitted from the language training element should require less language training once in Canada, thereby being able to participate sooner in Canadian life.

- Intended target population for basic language skills and orientation to refugees in camps abroad is 4,200, while over 60,000 Family Class immigrants and others should be reached with an orientation package on Canada.

- Start up: Early in 1989

Settlement Orientation in Canada ($8.5 M)

- Draws upon elements from two existing programs, the orientation services funded under the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program and the language training funded under the pilot Settlement Language Training Program (SLTP).

- Involves the expansion of orientation and basic settlement language skills.

- Targetted to adult immigrants who require such assistance to achieve the social adaptation normally associated with the first year of settlement.

- Immigrant women would be the main beneficiaries since they are the group most likely to be isolated from Canadian institutions and to have less access to current language courses geared to the labour market.

- Recognizes that most people, including women, will eventually seek labour market participation.

- The focus of orientation and settlement language skills would be on living and coping in the community and preparing for additional language courses, if needed, for the labour market.

- Funds would be provided to non-profit, non-governmental organizations to deliver flexible programming for enhanced orientation and settlement language skills to meet the needs of the immigrant.

- Current orientation and adaptation activities are effective for clients who depend on these services and are able to access them on their own. Disadvantaged groups, such as immigrant women who are normally dependent upon their spouse, do not seek out these otherwise accessible services. There is a need to direct program services to this group at the early stages of their arrival.

- The purpose of the initiative is to rectify this situation. It will allow us to reach out to the target group and to create program components to remove obstacles to their participation.

- Provisions would exist to provide for the trainee's transportation costs and supervised play groups for their pre-school dependents.

- Over 5,000 immigrants, mainly women are expected to receive basic language skills. Other orientation packages delivered by non-government organizations will reach out to over 35,000 newly arrived immigrants each year.

- Start-up - Early in fiscal year 1989-1990.

Language Training in the Work Place ($15 M)

- Involves training in the work place for immigrant women.

- Under Canadian Jobs Strategy, contractual arrangements would be made with employers for literacy/numeracy/language training on the employer's premises either outside or during working hours.

- Subsidies would be provided to employers for training during working hours.

- Employees trained would have CJS eligibility on the basis of being immigrant women without the skills, including language skills, necessary for any kind of advancement and, therefore, being vulnerable to job loss.

- Under skilled/under-employed immigrants, with basic literacy and numeracy skills could also be eligible.

- Provides opportunities for under skilled or underemployed women to gain the current experience expected by employers.

- Provides an opportunity from women to "unlock" themselves from ghettoized, dead-end, low-paying jobs with no hope of promotion or improvement.

- This initiative should reach approximately 4,500.
- Start-up: Early in fiscal year 1989/90.

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